

Fostering Partnerships Between Education, Business and Industry

CTE PROGRAMS CAN BE AT THE CENTER OF BOTH TODAY'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY'S WORKFORCE.

ONE WAY THAT THESE TWO NEEDS CAN INTERSECT IS THROUGH GROWING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND BUSINESSES.



Perkins Implementation Spotlight Series

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THE NEED FOR SKILLED WORKERS TO CONTINUALLY INNOVATE AND DRIVE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY LENDS CREDENCE TO THE IDEA OF PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE—and career and technical education (CTE) programs can be at the center of both today's economic recovery and the long-term future of the country's workforce. One way that these two needs can intersect is through growing partnerships between education and businesses. Increased coordination with business and industry is a much stronger theme within the 2006 Perkins Act. In fact two of the new purposes of the law allude to this theme—“supporting partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, area career and technical education schools, local workforce investment boards, business and industry, and intermediaries” and “providing individuals with opportunities throughout their lifetimes to develop, in conjunction with other education and training programs, the knowledge and skills needed to keep the United States competitive.”

References to entrepreneurship, small businesses, high-demand occupations and the involvement of workforce investment boards have also been added to the law. These changes emphasize the role that workforce needs and local economies should play in CTE programs. Many states, school districts and postsecondary institutions have begun to emphasize this role as they implement the new Perkins Act and invest increasingly scarce re-

sources. In Louisiana, state leaders put a focus on the connections between education and economic development front and center in their five-year Perkins plan. The very first sentence of the plan's executive summary reads, “The Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), partnering with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) and other state agencies, is committed to preparing a high quality workforce that will meet the needs of existing and new businesses in Louisiana.”

The plan continues, “career and technical education is one of Louisiana's most important assets to help create the opportunities for excellent education and training—efforts that will contribute to a dynamic economic environment to benefit all citizens of Louisiana.” One of the ways the state is ensuring CTE's contribution to critical economic areas is through the identification of seven targeted career pathways that are essential to the state's future workforce and economic needs. These pathways include:

- automotive
- construction
- education
- health care
- hospitality and tourism
- information technology
- manufacturing

As in many states, local programs are required to have business-industry advisory councils, and Louisiana has also put a special emphasis on industry-based credentials in both secondary and post-



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secondary programs. Another new way the state is looking to expand its outreach to business and industry leaders and strengthen partnerships is through a series of regional community CTE forums. The first forum was held in Lafayette, Louisiana, in early March, and at least seven more are planned across the state before the end of 2009. The forums are designed as outreach events for local employers and community leaders; through them the state department of education hopes to build awareness and support for CTE and showcase local programs and their impact on the community.

About 60 people attended the March forum, which was held at Acadian Ambulance's National Emergency Services

Academy, a state-of-the-art training facility run by a company that directly benefits from CTE students' education and training. An introduction to CTE and Perkins was provided, and students from local programs were able to showcase their skills. Students from the Pro Start culinary arts program in St. Martin Parish, which partners with the Louisiana Restaurant Association, provided lunch for attendees, and health care students from the surrounding community provided free blood pressure screenings and shared information about their internship experiences in local hospitals.

In addition, these events are also a way to connect local educators with business resources. State Superintendent of

Education Paul Pastorek said, "At each summit we also intend to make business and community leaders aware of work-based learning opportunities, internships, job shadowing and mentoring so that they can support our high school students and their futures as well as meet the workforce needs of their respective organizations and industries." The state is also looking to recruit business leaders to serve as subject matter experts and participate in a speakers bureau to enrich CTE students' classroom experiences, or to serve on the required advisory councils.

Ava Dejoie, business/industry liaison in the education department's CTE Business Unit, emphasized the importance of holding the outreach events at a business location to lend validity to the event and to CTE programs overall. She also discussed the important role that local chambers of commerce play in forging education-business partnerships and their role in promoting the forum and in getting business representatives to participate. "We want to do even more direct outreach in the future—with groups like Rotary Clubs and individual business leaders," she added.

The forums not only provide benefits to CTE, but also help show businesses how they can connect with local schools and training programs and lay the foundation for a future pipeline of skilled workers. Only through dynamic, two-way partnerships will CTE and business and industry be able to successfully compete in the 21st century global economy. **T**

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